

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 4473

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, RO

SUBJ: CEAUSESCU VISIT

REFS:(2-) BUCHAREST 4434; B) BUCHAREST A-243; C) BUCHAREST 4458;
D) PARIS 30792; E) STATE 237462

1. WE HAVE NO HARD INFORMATION ON REASONS FOR CURTAILMENT OF CEAUSESCU'S TRIP, BUT LACKING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT ANOTHER THEORY WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE IT MAY INVOLVE MIDDLE EAST, IN PARTICULAR ROMANIAN-ARAB RELATIONS, A DETERIORATION IN WHICH COULD HAVE SERIOUS INTERNAL EFFECTS IN ROMANIA.

2. AS EVIDENCE, WE KNOW THAT LE MONDE ON NOVEMBER 28 PUBLISHED ALGERIAN NEWS AGENCY ACCOUNT OF 15 POINTS AGREED BY ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS, ONE OF WHICH BEING THAT DEMARCHE WOULD BE MADE TO ROMANIA TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. FRENCH EMBASSY HERE SAYS FRANCE PRESS ITEM FROM LEBANON INDICATES THIS DEMARCHE HAS IN FACT BEEN MADE, WHICH MAY EXPLAIN SUDDEN MID-NIGHT ANNOUNCEMENT DECEMBER 1 OF CEAUSESCU'S TOPOVER IN ALGIERS (REF A) DESPITE KNOWLEDGE OF SPECULATION THAT ABRUPT CHANGE IN PLANS WOULD BRING. BY THIS REASONING, CEAUSESCU WOULD HAVE WANTED AT LEAST TO FURTHER EXPLAIN ROMANIAN POSITION TO BOUMEDIENNE AND PERHAPS TEMPORIZE ON (OR GIVE PRELIMINARY NEGATIVE REPLY TO) ARAB DEMARCHE, ESPECIALLY IF ARABS ARE BEGINNING TO HINT AT OIL THREAT UNLESS ISRAEL TIES CUT. AT CEAUSESCU'S DEPARTURE, ROMANIA'S NUMBER THREE FIGURE PARTY PRESIDUM MEMBER EMIL BODNARAS AND OTHER
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ROMANIAN VIP'S WERE NOTABLE UNWILLING TO SAY ANYTHING TO CHARGE ABOUT ALGIERS STOPOVER, AND CONFIDENTIAL TONE USED BY OTHER SOURCES (REF A) WOULD FIT THIS THEORY.

3. ROMANIAN DENIALS NOTWITHSTANDING (REFTEL D), ROMANIA IS VULNERABLE TO ANY ARAB CRUDE OIL CUTOFF. ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF TOTAL DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS ARE IMPORTED, AND WE CALCULATE THAT AT LEAST HALF OF THESE IMPORTS AND POSSIBLY MORE COMES FROM ALGERIA, IRAQ, LIBYA AND POSSIBLY OTHER ARAB STATES. DOMESTIC CRUDE OUTPUT PROBABLY COULD NOT EASILY BE EXPANDED TO COVER THIS VOLUME ON SHORT NOTICE. WE BELIEVE USSR, NOT NORMALLY A SOURCE FOR ROMANIA SINCE IT BEGAN TO IMPORT CRUDE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, HAS NOT YET AGREED TO SUPPLY WHAT GOR HAS BEEN REQUESTING (REF B).

4. MOREOVER, JUST-PUBLISHED 1974 ROMANIAN ECONOMIC PLAN (REF C) SETS HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC GOALS FOR NEXT YEAR WHICH ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON CONTINUED INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AMONG SUCH UNPREDICTABLE FACTORS AS FOREIGN TRADE AND AGRICULTURE. LOSS OF ARAB CRUDE WOULD REDUCE OUTPUT OF ROMANIA'S LARGE AND CRUCIAL DOMESTIC PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY AND, IN EXTERNAL SECTOR, WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT EXPORTS OF REFINED OIL PRODUCTS JUST AT TIME WHEN POOR AGRICULTURAL YEAR COULD BEGIN TO HAVE ITS OWN SLOWDOWN EFFECT ON EXPORTS.

5. HOWEVER, ANY ARAB DEMAND TO SEVER RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL WOULD OF COURSE INVOLVE IMPORTANT POINTS OF PRINCIPLE FOR GOR -- TOUCHING ON FOREIGN POLICY INDEPENDENCE, AVERSION TO OUTSIDE PRESSURE, RIGHT TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH ALL STATES, AND "NEUTRALITY" OVER ME. FOREIGN MINISTER MACOVESCU REPORTEDLY TOLD FOREIGN DIPLOMAT HERE BEFORE CEAUSESCU'S DEPARTURE THAT ARAB DEMAND WAS "IMPOSSIBLE", THAT ROMANIA STILL HOPED TO PLAY ROLE IN ME PEACE CONFERENCE BUT WOULD NOT BE PUSHED AROUND. FINAL GOR DECISION ON THIS WOULD REQUIRE CEAUSESCU'S PRESENCE, AND HE MAY IN FACT HAVE THOUGHT OF USING POST-DECEMBER 7 TIME SLOT FOR VISITS TO ARAB LEADERS ENROUTE HOME. (WE NOTE THAT HIS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE CORNELIU MANESCU (FORMER FORMIN) DEPARTED DECEMBER 4 FOR TUNIS TO CONTINUE ROUND OF CONTACTS IN ARAB CAPITALS BEGUN EARLIER).
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